



Still

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The patch crackled over the radio in spurts. Chunks of the story were missing, whether by panicked relaying or technological omission. The gist was clear—there was an infant who had arrested. The groups tachycardic pace conveyed a hurried energy as crowds raced down to a corner room in the emergency department. Faces, masked and shielded, who usually didn't traverse these halls asked worriedly for supplies. A cart was found. The hum of the warmer filled the space.

They burst through the doors to the ambulance bay at a trot. A comically large stretcher whisked him into the room, while a paramedic encircled him with his hands as if squeezing juice from a lemon.

His face was suddenly transposed. The child was mere days older than mine. My daughter's features shifted over his like Mrs. Potatoe Head. Children at that age are never still. A constant flurry of noise and tears and spills and laugh. Bursting with energy and song as if each moment is absolute: Joy, Hunger, Fear, and Sleep. These moments are untarnished and pure. Even sleep, a rare moment of quiet, is

punctuated by rhythmic breathing and soft stirring. For him, even breaths failed to move his chest. He was still.

He was lifeless. Nothing more than flesh and congealed blood. Everyone else could see that but the mother's cries continued. Don't stop.

Details were never really clear. He was found in the crib after a nap. He was being watched by a neighbour. He was sleeping with mom in bed. The paramedics said they were in a poor neighborhood with a voice that insinuated more details would be forthcoming but never arrived.

The call for pulse checks and Epi came on queue. No one wanted to interrupt the rhythm or admit what we all knew.

He was cold pale and blue.

There was nothing more we could do.

The truth, though known to all, was so difficult to say out loud that it stuck in my throat for a moment. As if the child waited on my words to transition to whatever was next. As if that truth would command his blood to stop flowing. But that power is not ours. We are just messengers.

There was nothing more we could do.

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Declarations

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